INTERNAL SECURITY CHALLENGES AND THE DILEMMA OF TROOP’S CONTRIBUTION TO UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS: THE NIGERIA’S EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT
Nigeria is one of the major troop contributing countries to the UN peacekeeping operations around the world since 1960. However, since the returned of democratic rule in the country in 1999, the country continuously encountered different internal security challenges. The Nigerian military is preoccupied with the struggles to end internal security challenges that seem obvious threatening the unity of the country. This paper examined the dilemma facing Nigeria as a UN traditional troop contributor and her domestic’s social problems. This empirical qualitative study gathered information through unstructured interview from twelve (12) respondents who are drawn through purposive sampling. These professionals are from the academia, military experts, police, legislative members and peace advocates. Because of the security reasons the identity of our respondents were not disclosed throughout. The study reveals that though Nigerian military is heavily preoccupied with issues such Boko Haram in the northeast, the Niger-Delta militants in the oil rich region of the south-south, the religious conflict in the middle belt; the Nigerian government cannot afford to completely withdraw from contributing in the promotion of international peace and security through UN peacekeeping. The study also reveals the needs for Nigerian state to review her foreign policy towards peacekeeping operations for strategic economic development by contributing functional and serviceable equipment of UN standard specifications.

Key words: Peacekeeping operation, internal security challenges, Nigerian military, Boko Haram insurgency, Niger-Delta militancy.

1. INTRODUCTION
Nigeria is a complex and culturally diverse country with over 250 different ethnic groups spread across the country (Lewis, 2006). Though, out of the over 250 ethnic groups, there are three major ethnic groups that are outstanding in terms of numerical strength. These are the Hausa-Fulani largely located in the Northern part of the country; the Yoruba ethnic group found in the west of the country and finally the Igbos who are fairly dominant in the East of the country. Similarly, the country has the combination of Muslims, Christians and traditional religious adherents. The northern part of Nigeria is dominated by the muslins faithful while the southern part of the country is largely occupied by Christians. While traditionalist spread across.
The country got independence from her erstwhile British colonial master on 1st October 1960. Since then, Nigeria has been on the world stage. Nigeria holds a strategic and important place on the continent of Africa and the global community at large. Nigeria is a diplomatic force to be reckoned with in Africa and also a major player in world politics (Gambari, 2008). Nigeria is a house of over 180 million peoples going by the population projection 2015 (Omilusi, 2016). Nigeria is one-fifth population of the sub-Saharan Africa and the most populous Black Country in the world. Expectedly, any emerging issues and development in the land will invariably generate diverse interest and opinion internationally.

The role of Nigeria in peacekeeping operations around the world cannot be overemphasized. The contributions of Nigeria in the advancement of world peace was first witnessed with the participation of Nigerian military contingent in the UN led peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo called United Nations peacekeeping operation in the Congo (ONUC) between 1960-1964. Since then, Nigeria continues to contribute generously toward the promotion of international peace and security under the UN umbrella and other regional and continental bodies like ECOWAS and AU. The country has equally undertaken bilateral missions in Tanzania and the Republic of Chad. In all these missions, the country has sacrificed immensely in terms of human lives and national resources.

There is clear evidence that Nigeria’s contributions will continue to be needed by humanity in all facets of peace support operations particularly in the 21st century and beyond. However, in the recent past, after the return of democratic rule in the year 1999, the stability of the country is apparently jeopardized by the unprecedented violence from the political, ethnic and religious conflicts that engulfed the country. There is manifestation of organized violent crimes in almost all the states of the federation. Needless to say, since the end of Nigeria’s civil war between 1967-1970, the country did not experience internal challenges that seriously threaten the foundation of it existence than the last few years.

The Nigerian Army (NA) is a component arm of the Nigerian armed forces and constitutes the force’s oldest and largest arm. The Nigerian army has been the one that borne the greatest burden of peacekeeping operations in which Nigerian military has been participating since Nigeria attained independence in 1960. Nigeria has been a major troop’s contributor to UN peacekeeping operations. Nigeria has participated in over 40 UN peacekeeping operations around the world between 1960-2015. However, the recent development in the country as a result of internal security challenges from the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East of the country and the violent militancy groups from the oil rich Niger-Delta region, the reoccurring inter and intra-ethnic-religious conflict in the country, the meltdown of the economy and other social crimes has threaten the contribution of Nigeria toward peacekeeping operations around the world.

The internal security challenges have consumed large number of the Nigerian military. Several soldiers were drafted and deployed to these various conflicts areas in the country. the security threats proved beyond the control mechanism of the police. The internal fabric of the country is shaken by these unscrupulous elements in the society. The subject of this paper is to discuss how these internal conflicts in Nigeria has affected the capacity of Nigerian
military and how it influence contributions of Nigeria toward peacekeeping operations around the world.

The study intends to take a diagnosis of the doubting internal challenges confronting Nigeria in the recent years, give an overview of Nigeria’s contributions toward advancement of UN peacekeeping operations around the globe from 1960 when Nigeria first went to Congo. Finally, the study will analytically compare and contrast the role of Nigerian military in ending internal conflicts in Nigeria vi-sa-vise her strength of military contribution in UN peacekeeping operations in recent period.

2. NIGERIA’S INTERNAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

Nigeria is a notable country not only in sub-Saharan Africa but in the entire world. The country got independence on 1st of October 1960. Nigeria became a major player in the world politics when she first participated in UN peacekeeping operations in the Democratic republic of the Congo 1960-1964. Nigeria move to lime light of global attention as the most populous black nation in the world and also the sixth largest oil producing country in the world (Omilusi, 2016). The oil boom of the 1970s has increased the level of Nigeria’s diplomatic relations around the world. The country has succeeded in promoting foreign policy objective particularly in the area of peacekeeping operations and rendering leadership through African continent by spearheading and influencing the formation of Organization of African Unity (OAU) now African Union (AU) and the famous Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Not long after independence, the country went into civil war between 1967-1970 which nearly breaks the country. The Nigerian military fought the civil war and maintained the unity of the country. Since the end of the first civilian regime in 1966 through a bloody coup, successive military regimes in the country did not do much in bringing socio-economic development in the country. Therefore, decades after independence many people live in abject poverty and poor social services. The military juntas did not allow freedom of expression by the poor citizenry which undermined the principle of “rule of law”. All throughout the periods of the military rule in Nigeria 1966-1979 and 1983-1999 the constitution was usually suspended and the soldiers rule by decrees based on their whims and caprices (Gbor, 2004). With the return of democratic rule in the country on 29th May 1999, it present a negative pictures of divisive tendencies in which hitherto people were forcefully suppressed under dictatorship.

Since independence, Nigeria has witnessed deep seated divisions, social and political instability and reoccurring conflicts (Lewis, 2011). Several ethnic groups in Nigeria felt aggrieved in one way or the other in different times how the society is been handled. Even the three major ethnic groups were not left out. The Hausa-Fulani who dominated the North and presumably the most populous region and equally larger in size called for the breakup of the country even before independence in the year 1953 as a result of political differences between the Southern and Northern representative over the issue of self rule; the Igbo who are predominantly in the East equally declared the state of Biafara as their sovereign independent republic in 1967 which led to the famous Nigerian civil war in which the federal forces (Nigerian army forces) fought the secessionist (the rebellious Igbo) to keep the unity
of the country. The Yorubas who are predominantly in the west and the most educated called for Odudua republic during the reign of the former military rulers General Ibrahim Babangida and late General Sani Abacha (1985-1998).

Therefore, lack of internal cohesion in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon but the long military rule compounded the problem as a result of total neglect of institutional and social development. Nigeria faces major national security challenges which undermined the existence of the states in the recent past. The Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast of the country has caused serious social dislocation not only in the northeast of the country but it has affected the country at large negatively which led to death of thousands of people in the last seven (7) years and displacement of people running into millions and unquantifiable measure of destructions of properties. The religious tension between Muslims-Christians in the middle belt of the country is also a serious source of concerned to any serious government. And equally very important social security issue is the reoccurring conflict in the Niger-Delta Oil rich region of Nigeria. Another fundamental problem faced by Nigeria recently is the dwindling economic fortunes of the country resulting from the crash of the global crude oil which is the major source of foreign exchange earning of the country; the downfall of the oil price compounded the economic hardship of the country couple with already stricken poverty created by massive elite corruption. Recently, former British Prime Minister described Nigeria and Afghanistan as “fantastically corrupt the most corrupt nations” (Thisday News Paper, 20th Sept, 2016). These three major internal security challenges in Nigeria in additions to dwindling oil prices attracted the attention of this study. Large contingent of military force were already in the battle field spread across the country while UN is still asking for more troops from contributing countries. The question is, would Nigeria sustain the tempo?

2.1 The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria

Nigeria’s security challenge has been significantly undermined through the activities of the violent extremist non state actors mostly made up of restive and radicalized unemployed youth as foot soldiers (Walker, 2002). The Boko Haram (BH) started as a religious ideology that has one of its major belief and principle that “western education is prohibited”. The BH group otherwise called by its members as Jama’atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda’awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) was popularly known to be founded by its late leader Mohammed Yusuf. He advocated against anything western education and therefore teaches his members to propagate this ideology of abhorring anything western in nature including education, health, police, military, Nigerian constitution which was built on the western ideology etc. Yusuf started propagating his ideologies in Maiduguri the headquarters of Borno and spread rapidly to other parts of the north. He gained large followers within a short period of time from the disaffected, restive unemployed youth population. The ideology spread by the JAS/BH members against western civilization soon begins to have clash with the law enforcement agents. JAS/BH under Yusuf only criticizes government and particularly northern Muslims leaders for involving themselves in what he (Yusuf) described as an illegitimate and not Islamic system (Omilusi, 2016).
The evolution of JAS/BH and its present violent ideologies started as an isolate, mostly peaceful religious community to a violent insurgency that embraces suicide attacks, destructions of properties and hostage taking (Comolli, 2015). There are different versions about the actual origin of the BH sect. Nigerian security agencies believed it is a product of Muslim Youth Organization founded in the University of Maiduguri far 1995 by its leader Abubakar Lawan, then very conservative and non-violent (Cook, 2011). Other version as advanced by Walker (2002) believed it was originated from a Mosque in Maiduguri located in the house of a famous wealthy Nigerian man Alh. Muhammadu Ndimi by Mohammed Ali who later migrated to Yobe state. When they had a confrontation with security forces in the year 2003 and 2004 Mohammed Ali and many of his followers were believed to have been killed and their based was destroyed in Yobe. The survivors of the 2003 and 2004 military assault returned to Maiduguri and Mohammed Yusuf lead them. Most of the versions describing the origin of the BH has Mohammed Yusuf as a central figure who inspired many several youths to joined the movement because of his charismatic leadership as observed by Comolli (2015)

All competing, albeit somewhat overlapping, accounts of the early years of the sect are plausible and, for the sake of producing a comprehensive history of Boko Haram’s evolution, are worth recording. However, all these versions converge on Yusuf entering and making a defining moment for the group. Through his charismatic personality he became a magnet for its members and the recognized leader or at least main front-man of the sect.

As the sect continues to grow in number, confrontation with law enforcement agencies like the police and the military became frequent. They attacked police stations in Yobe and Borno times without number. In most of the confrontations they killed police officers and destroyed many stations and carted away with weapons in the police custody (Onuoha, 2012). Of course, the police in return took series of majors in which several BH members were killed and arrested. The clandestine attacks against public buildings and regular confrontations with the police continue until 2009. Before 2009, government did not take the case of BH seriously. In June 2009, there was fierce battle between the sect members and the security forces established by the government a year ago (Operation Flush- 2008) to flush out robberies in the state of Borno (Comolli, 2015). In that fight on June 11, several BH members were believed to have been killed and many injured. BH members through it leader Mohammed Yusuf declared war on the security forces and they are determined to fight to the end. On 26th July 2009, they attacked Police station in Bauchi and violent erupted in Borno and Yobe (Comolli, 2015).

On the same day, the former President, late Umar Yar’adua directed the security forces to use any reasonable force to crush the insurgency and restore peace to all the trouble areas. Following the presidential order directing the force to bring an end of the BH, military personnel in hundred and police were deployed to clear Maiduguri (the headquarters of the BH) of all elements of insurgency. The military and police assault on the sect members continues for days until on 30th July when the leader of the sect Yusuf was arrested including his second in command Abubakar Shekau by the military and handed over to the police (Cook, 2011; Onuoha, 2012; Comalli, 2015 and Omilusi, 2016). Later Mohammed Yusuf
was killed by security forces; the police. Shekau was able to escape from the custody of the police.

Since the July 2009 crack down on the BH sect members by Nigerian security forces which led to the killing of over 700 BH members and the arrest of several leaders of the sect. the group went into silence for some time before it later in 2010 resurface with more deadly attacks and sophisticated tactics-kidnapping and hostage taking, suicide bombings, attacks on both military and police formations throughout the states of northeast and other part of the north, attacks on public institutions particularly schools, motor parks and markets killing hundreds, equally religious buildings such as Churches and Mosques were among the major targets where both Muslims and Christians were killed in large number.

The spate of the attacks from 2010 onward prompted the federal government to take major steps by establishing a Joint Task Force Operation Restore Order (JTF ORO) in 2011 (Comolli, 2015; Omilusi, 2016). The JTF/ORO comprises the Nigerian military (Air Force and Army), the Nigerian Police force, State Security Service (SSS), Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIM), the Nigeria Customs Service to provide multi-service and general crack down on the Boko Haram elements throughout the states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. The mandate of the JTF is to restore law and order in the entire northeast and the most affected areas in particular like Borno and Yobe. The Army led task force include counter terrorism unit of the force which coordinate the ground operations throughout the states. Increase in military spending and security budget was witnessed around 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014 (Muriana, 2014).

As a result of the increase in the frequency of BH attacks in the northeast, the Nigerian federal government decided to permanently established JTFs operational bases in Yobe, Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe and Taraba. In all these operational bases scattered across the states of northeast, the Nigerian military carried much of the battle. Nigeria posit by Comolli "possesses the best equipped and best funded military force in West Africa and can rely on 80,000 active troops..."(Comolli, 2015). The number of the military personnel required to deal with the BH menace continue to increase because of the growing spiral of violent incidences of the insurgents. Subsequently, government decided to declare state of emergency in some selected fifteen (15) local governments within the sates of Borno, Yobe, Niger and Plateau on 31st of December 2011 (Muriana, 2014). Declaration of emergency state it means increase military occupations of the affected areas.

The government response to BH attacks was extensively criticize from both local and foreign bodies, describing the government of the former President Goodluck Jonathan as widely very ineffective and irresponsible to the plight of the poor. If you travel on the road throughout the region of the Northeast and the North at large, you find military and JTF Check points spread across the length and the breath of these affected land. Nigerian military became seriously pre-occupied with war against the insurgency through the period of 2009 to date.

Another second state of emergency was declared by the President on the 14th of May 2013 which affected the entire states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. Military were given much power to stop and search and, detention of suspects and enforcement of curfew in the entire three (3) states. The increase in the military spending to crush to BH did not translate into
concrete reality. BH continue to advance into major cities of the three deadly affected states and other far northern states like Kano, Bauchi, Gombe, Plateau, Abuja (Federal Capital of Nigeria) and pockets of attacks spread all over the country with the exception of far East and far West. The declaration of the emergency only compounded the problem by denying the population of those communities’ fundamental human rights such as right to freedom of movement and association.

The government of President Jonathan was widely accused of ineffectiveness and high level of corruption among the top echelon of the government. Large amount of money (Billion in USD) was voted for the purchase of weapons but it ended into the pockets of the senior military officers. Military boys in the battle field (the rank and file) were seen running away from the battle ground for their life from the dreaded BH who posses superior weapons. About fourteen (14) local governments were taken over by the BH and their flag was hoisted in all these places. Some account has it that about 20% of Nigerian territory was in total control of BH by December 2014 (Paden, 2015). In other words, government lost its territories to the BH insurgency under the effective leadership of Abubakar Shekau. BH fighters took over several military formations and dislodged numerous police officers from their stations and took over the possession of weapons. The Nigerian military as observed by Ilevbare (2014) is proven very ineffective and not capable of combating the insurgency:

The military’s systematic approach to an asymmetric counterterrorism battle in states under emergency has failed. The spate of almost daily attacks on hapless civilians underscores this point.

Despite billions of naira (over 20%) of Nigeria’s annual budget being expended as a security votes to end the insurgency but the military find it very had to withstand the assault inflicted by the BH.

2.2 Ethno-religious crisis in Nigeria

Nigeria is religiously one of the most complex countries in the sub-Saharan Africa. The country recorded several religious uprising which has claimed the life of many people. The hub of this religious driven conflict is largely concentrated in the North central region of country and North West of the country. These states that are “hot beds” are: Kaduna, Plateau, Kano and sometimes Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba, Adamawa, Kwara, Borno, Nasarawa, Benue and Niger. Since colonial times, Nigeria has been divided between the highly dominant Muslim in the North and highly dominant Christians from the south. Nigeria is adjudge to be the most largest country in the world with a population of just over 180 million people who are evenly divided between the faith of Muslims and Christians (US institute of Peace, Special Report, 2015)

Even before Nigeria got independence, the North which has dominant population of Muslims has express preference for Shariah laws than the common laws practiced by the British Colonial masters. This preference did not go down with the minority Christians in the region. However, British allowed the introduction of the Shariah laws to govern some aspect of the Muslims social life which include Marriage issues, Inheritance, Market. This led to the
creation of Shariah Courts in most parts of the country where Muslims exist in substantial number except in the South-East and South-South.

Religious conflict in Nigeria is very often between Muslims and Christians especially as their beliefs and religious practices run counter to each other. Nigerian state experienced deadly religious uprising in the 1980s and 1990s but this recent conflict took new dimension with the return of democratic rule in the country from 1999. Jos, Plateau state capital witnessed the worst religious conflicts from 2000 up to date that led to death of people counting into thousands and destruction of properties worth billions of Naira. In Plateau state as the conflict keep exacerbating in 2001, the government of former President Olusegun Obasanjo had to declare State of emergency and removed the executive Governor and suspended all democratic institutions for six months to allow the Military administrator under Col. Chris Ali to restore order. Heavy military contingent was deployed and station in all strategic locations in the state and check points were mounted in all major high ways. The constitution was equally suspended which gave the military the emergency power rule.

Kaduna, also a hot bed of religious crises experienced religious destruction between 2000 up to date. In all these conflicts, Police has proven very much ineffective; therefore military are usually drafted to quench these crises (Omilusi, 2016). Perhaps, the strength of the Nigeria military has been question whether they can afford to handle these intractable religious and communal conflicts ravaging the state and threatening the stability of the country. These religious conflicts are not limited to these two states (Plateau and Kaduna) but it spread across the states of the North. More vulnerable also is the ancient city of Kano and Bauchi. Therefore, in all this reoccurring decimal of conflicts, military are on top of the situation as the Police proved inadequate to end the crisis. Soldiers are originally trained to provide protection of the territorial integrity and defend the country against any external aggression. In other words, they are train to face an enemy and to kill the enemy without any recourse. In Nigeria, since the return of the democratic rule in the year 1999, soldiers became an instrument of crushing internal conflicts ranging from insurgency in the northeast to religious conflicts in the north central and the militancy in the Niger-Delta oil rich region of the country.

2.3 Niger-Delta militancy

The Niger-Delta conflict has been an old conflict in the history of Nigeria and in particular the history of Oil explorations in the country. It has been a reoccurring decimal in the vicious circle of conflicts in the country where indigenes of those communities carried arms against the state for the state failure to address environmental degradation born by the activities of the oil companies. Though violent flare-up has been part of Nigeria as noted earlier but this democratic dispensation witnessed the spontaneous rise of destructive violent groups. In other words, from 1999, the democratic freedom created further agitations by numerous ethnic nationalities over resources control and alleged marginalization (Omilusi, 2016). The glaring inability of the state to tackle this problem holistically and effectively it continue to threaten the survival of the nascent democracy in the country (Duruji, 2010).

Nigeria is adjudged to use coercion and has remained adamant for several decades particularly under military rule, thereby hindering its citizens from imbibing the principles of
democratic culture and social way of life under constitutional authority. Correspondent argued that this radical ideologies and extremism are creation of the state where its create space by failing to provide social services thereby alienating the downtrodden.

The decaying social infrastructure in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria led many ethnic groups to carry arms against the state which failed to uplift the life of the people in the communities. The Niger-Delta Oil region of Nigeria comprises the following states- Bayelsa, Delta, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, Edo and Cross River. Federal government of Nigeria largely depends on the exportation of the Oil for her foreign exchange earnings. In other words, the economy of Nigeria about 70% depends on the petroleum products explorations from the region. Hence, foreign companies established their based in those communities for several decades. However, the people of the communities believed they are living in abject poverty in a midst of abundant wealth. Some account of argument has it that Oil has been more of a curse than blessing to the people of this region (Ejibunu, 2007). In this region, conflict begin to manifest itself in various forms from militancy, hostage taking to kidnapping of foreign oil employees and continues interruption of oil production activities through the destruction of oil and gas installations and facilities (Omilusi, 2016).

Oil explorations in this part of Nigeria results into environmental degradation, oil spillage led environmental pollution which affect water inhabitants and reduce access to portable drinking water. Apart from living in polluted environment as a result of the oil work, federal and state government failed woefully in their social contract theory of providing social development to the community. These failures of both the federal and state government were attributed largely to leadership negligence and corruption.

The people of the communities resort to use of violence to register their grievances. This led to creation of several groups such Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafara (MASSOB), and more recently, Niger-Delta Avengers (NDA). As these ethnics groups continue their onslaught on government, military and police were deployed by the government of Nigeria to ensure restoration of order, security and life of the citizenry and more importantly protection of Oil workers who are mostly expatriates. Military crackdown escalated in the 1990s which led to the killing of over 2,000 people and arrest of several others including one of the major figures of the fighter- Saro-Wiwa (Omilusi, 2016). He was later executed by the government of the late dictator, Gen. Sani Abacha (Gambari, 2008). Brutal military approach of the 1990s could not work; hence government under former President Obasanjo created Niger Delta Development Commission with the sole purpose of developing the region. Because of corruption, the commission could not achieve much as desired. The government of former President Yar'adua strike a deal with the militants through Presidential Amnesty Program (PAP). The amnesty deal was signed by the government with major militants and their groups that they will surrender all weapons and embrace government gesture of providing them with monthly payments and even sponsoring them for higher education studies within and outside Nigeria. The amnesty proved successful and effective because disruptions on oil facilities have drastically reduced and violence
activities such as kidnapping and hostage taking also significantly disappeared under the President Yar’adua and his immediate successor President Jonathan (2008-2015).

With the emergence of President Muhammadu Buhari in the 2015 general elections, the Niger-Delta militants intensify their destructions of oil facilities and installations in the area. This intensification was not unconnected with the defeat suffered by the former President (Goodluck Jonathan) who is Ijaw by ethnic affiliation and Ijaw ethnic tribe is one of the major ethnic groups in the area. Couple with this trauma of losing the presidency, government of President Buhari decided to cut down the payment of the amnesty program deal. The government of President Buhari which was elected on the campaign promised to “fight Corruption” observed amnesty deal as means of enriching corrupt individuals at the expense of developing the environment. Hence, decided to publically announce government readiness to stop the circle of corruption observed in the amnesty deal (Onuoha, 2016). This government action triggered fresh violence in the area. Militants resume their nefarious activities against the state. In response, government decided to use force by deploying armed military personnel from ground army to the Navy and Air force. The newly formed Niger Delta Avengers became very pronounced in the execution of their threats on daily basis by destroying numerous government facilities in the area which led to the closure of many foreign oil companies fearing the safety of their personnel. Countdown by government forces did not help matters; it only succeeded in compounding the crisis. The strength of the Nigerian military was exerted in the fight to end the militancy by deploying heavy military operation called “Operation Crocodile”. The desire of the Nigerian government to ensure restoration of stability in conflict ridden Niger-Delta in other to allow steady supply of Oil to international market for the revenue generation of the country prompted the government to charge the military to use all means to crush the renewed violence in the region (Onuoha, 2016)

3. NIGERIA IN UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Peacekeeping operation is more of an invention of the United Nations (UN) in the late 1940s. The UN was established at the end of the Second World War (1945) with basic objectives of promoting global peace and security. The UN was established based on charters which clearly spelt out its objectives and the workings of the organization. This influential UN document (Charter) has more than ten thousand words comprises of 111 articles, groups into 19 chapters (UN Charter).

The major objective of establishing the UN by its founding fathers (China, France, UK, US and USSR) is to maintain international peace and security and to prevent outbreak of conflict anywhere in the World through the idea of collective security concept. As the Security Council settled for business to do it job of ensuring promotion and sustenance of international peace and security, it gave rise to venturing into peacekeeping operations and peace missions across the world. This marked the beginning of the UN peacekeeping operations in conflict ravege areas of the world (Hughes, 1997; Okereke, 2009).

The preamble of the UN Charter committed the UN to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.” Therefore article 1 of the UN Charter read as follows, to:
maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace.

(United Nations Charter, 1945)

Chapter SIX (6) of the UN Charter empowers the UNSC to use pacific means in settlement of disputes between nations and where pacific means failed, UNSC is further authorized under chapter seven (7) to deploy the use of collective force in the settlement of disputes between and among nations. Virtually from the beginning, the collective security idea as envisage in chapter seven (7) of the UN Charter proved difficult to be applied. The post 1945 international political structure of the world created a bipolar world order. The emergence of two powerful blocs; the East and the West gave birth to rivalries and suspicious between the two blocs. Therefore, use of revolutionary UN idea of collective force to settle disputes between and among nations proved not practicable. Each of the blocs is working tirelessly to protect her interests to detriment of the fundamental objectives of establishing the UN. As much as the UN Charter emphasized the idea of collective action by member states to promote peace and security around the world, there is no place in the UN Charter where peacekeeping is categorically mentioned. However, the advocates of peacekeeping usually make reference to chapter 6 ½ as a legal basis for the UN peacekeeping operation (MacQueen, 2006; Okereke, 2009; MacQueen, 2011; Sanda, 2012). In other words, peacekeeping is an ad hoc activity improvised by the UN to enhance peaceful conflict resolution in a Post-World War II international political system.

The preponderance of peacekeeping operations as an activity designed to resolve conflict among nations and within nations became increasingly high in post Cold War period. Peacekeeping operation as noted earlier is an idea of the UN Security Council to establish an operational force and deploy personal to volatile areas after a ceasefire with a resolution that usually provides the operational guidelines. The operations work within the limit provided by the Security Council resolution and work towards settlement of peace and order without necessarily violating the rights of the inhabitants and the parties involves (Hughes, 1997; Palmer & Perkins, 2010; Heldt & Wallensteen, 2007). Peacekeeping is been described as an activity which usually get the sanction of the UNSC and geared towards observing ceasefires agreement and separating hostiles states. Okereke defined peacekeeping operation in its classical form as:

When parties to a conflict, typically two states, or between a state and rebel groups engage in armed conflict, agree to the interposition of UN or foreign troops to uphold a ceasefire. In such instances, limited number of lightly armed troops are introduced and situated between the combatants to provide a symbolic guarantor of peace.

(2009: 566)

Peacekeeping is similarly described as a traditional form of UN peace operation characteristically involving either military surveillance/observation of ceasefires or
interposition between antagonistic forces (it may be combination of both observation and interposition) with a guiding principles of three key features; consent of the belligerents, impartiality of the force and non application of force except for self defense (Bellamy & Williams, 2010).

At the point when Nigeria joined the premier international organization, the UN in October 1960, UN was engaged in peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Therefore, Nigeria in her commitment to cooperate with the UN in promoting international peace and security guided by her foreign policy decided to joined the UN forces by deploying her troops to participate in the peacekeeping operation in the DRC. The ushering of Nigeria into United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC, 1960-64) marked a watershed of Nigeria’s participation and involvement in peacekeeping. (Olusola, 2015).


4. NIGERIAN MILITARY AND UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

When you discuss Nigeria in peacekeeping operations you are invariably discussing the role of Nigerian military in the promotion of global peace and security, either under the umbrella of the UN or other regional bodies like the ECOWAS and OAU now AU, and also Nigeria participated in bilateral arrangement like the case of Chad (Operation Harmony I & II) and the Tanzanian operation. From 1960 to 2015, Nigeria participated in not less than 40 out of 70 peacekeeping operations under the command of the UN. Most of these peacekeeping
operations were largely involved by Nigerian army and in some few instances Police, Air Force and Navy were involved (Gbor, 2004). The Nigerian Army (NA) is a component of the Nigerian military or Nigerian armed forces and it constitutes the oldest and biggest arm. Argued by Gbor (2004) and Nwolise (2004), that the Nigerian army has been the major arm of the forces that bear the greatest load of peacekeeping operations to which Nigeria was involved from 1960 to date.

Nigeria has been a major player in the troops contributing countries (TCCs) that continue to support the UN in the promotion of international peacekeeping operations all over the world. From the study above, it is clearly apparent that Nigeria is power to be reckoned with in the global politics of UN peacekeeping. As at 2010, Nigeria was the 5th largest contributor of troops to UN operations with 877 police, 76 Military Experts on Mission (MEM) and 4888 troops, putting a total of 5841 personnel. In the year 2000, records shows that Nigeria was the second largest troop contributor with 3372 troops after India with 4662. Not only that Nigeria contributes immensely in terms of military strength to the UN operations, Nigerian military equally perform excellently well during most of their operations. Nigeria’s commitment to peacekeeping operations has earned the country numerous accolades within the comity of nations. The country has distinguished herself as a regional power in African politics because of her unmatched credentials in the stabilization of many countries in Africa through the instrumentality of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) forces. Nigeria also distinguished herself as a great power in world politics by committing huge resources in the promotion of global peace and security through ECOVAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). As a result of Nigeria’s military performance in the world of peacekeeping, former UN Secretary General, Banki-Moon appointed a Nigerian Lt. Gen. Chikadibia Obiako as the Peacekeeping Adviser and Assistant Secretary General at the UN headquarters. This position as observed by Okereke, (2009) is the highest military position in the UN. Furthermore, in recognition of the Nigerian army contributions under UN platform of peacekeeping, Prof. Joy U. Ogwu was elected Chairperson of the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (SCPO) in July 2008 (Okereke, 2009). Furthermore, numerous Nigerian contingents to UN, AU and ECOVAS-ECOMOG peace missions have won several medals and awards for meritorious service in various mission areas around the globe. Similarly, 26 gallant officers of the Nigerian armed Forces have distinguished themselves in service as field commanders of several UN and regional missions under ECOVAS-ECOMOG. Similarly, Nigeria was elected 4 times as a member of the UN Security Council unprecedented in the history of African representation in the UNSC.

In the West African sub region, Nigeria has remarkably demonstrated leadership potentials through the instrumentality of the regional body, the ECOVAS-ECOMOG. ECOMG forces under the leadership of Nigeria spearheaded the restoration of peace and stability in the countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau. Nigeria military successfully restored peace and order in the trouble Liberia and peacefully conducted free and fair elections which led to the emergence of the former war lord Charles Tailor as the Liberian president in the year 1997. Equally, Nigerian under the ECOMOG forces not only restored peace to Sierra Leone but re-instated the deposed President of the country AhmadTejan Kabbah who was removed through coup d’état in 1998. Nigerian military have operated with distinction not
only within the framework of ECOMOG in West African sub-region but in Africa at large and the world as a whole (Zabadi, 2009). Most of the UN operations in Africa were only to some extend successful because of Nigeria’s participations (Okoosi-Simbine, 2004). Nigeria sacrificed her national security interest to support the UN in the area of peacekeeping.

The relevance of Nigeria’s military performance in peace support operations has been asserted for a very long time. If not because of the timely intervention of Nigerian contingent in the UN mission in Cote D’ Ivoire; United Nations Operations in Cote D’ Ivoire (UNOCI 2004-to date), the Ivorian crisis will have continue unabated for longer period. Similarly, huge credit goes to Nigerian military for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL (1999-2005). The competence of her (Nigeria) peacekeepers made Nigeria a dependable and reliable mediator that is sought after for maintenance of peace and security in conflict areas around the world (Akadiri, 2003).

5. NIGERIA’S INTERNAL SECURITY CHALLENGES AND THE FUTURE OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

There is no doubt, the surgeon so far into the internal dynamics of Nigeria’s political environment; it reveals that the country is in serious dilemma. These emerging challenges discussed so far have posed a serious threat to the survival of the country. The radical BH posed a dangerous threat to the internal security of the state, the reoccurrences of intra and inter-religious conflicts in the north central of country in the last few years has taken new dimension since the return of democratic governance in 1999. The militancy in the Niger-Delta Oil rich region of the country posed a dangerous threat also to the continued existence of the country as a unified state. All these are happening to the country when her major source of foreign exchange earnings; the Crude Oil crash in the world market leaving her with nothing but serious economic crisis. All these internal security challenges which threaten the fabric of the Nigerian state, the Nigerian military were on top of the situation to ensure they restore order to the state as a whole and law abiding citizens’ moves around to do their business without molestation.

This study reveals that, even with the internal security challenges’ confronting the country, Nigeria is still willing to continue to participate in the UN peacekeeping operation. Weighing the army’s internal security operations against the peacekeeping support commitment outside the country, it is obvious that Nigerian Army has been overstretched operationally. Former Chief of Army Staff, Ihejirika commenting on the overstretched of the country’s Army when he said “practically every Nigerian Army (NA) unit is engaged and there is no redundancy or reserves to cater for rest and recuperation of troops” (Ihejirika, 2012). Manpower constraints in recent years constitute one of the costs of Nigeria’s troop involvement in peacekeeping missions. Nigerian troop are currently engaged in internal security challenges and this internal operations argued by respondent, has taken a toll on its manpower. In view of this he said, ‘the number of troops available for training and other routine duties is limited thereby overstretching the few troops on the ground”. He continued, in most cases, when troops earmarked for peacekeeping leave the country, it result to man power shortage. He argued the few soldiers behind at the rear (rear elements) would have a lot of constraints confronting the prevailing security challenges.
Another major challenge that seems working against Nigeria’s commitment to troop’s contribution to peacekeeping is the collapsed of the economy in recent years. Deployment of men and equipments for UN peacekeeping imposes financial burden on Troops Contributing Countries (TCC). Nations states, to benefit immensely from the participation in terms of economic output, nations need to buy functional and serviceable equipments which may cost a colossal amount of money in USD. For a force Battalion from Nigeria to be deployed in a UN peace mission it require 36 APCs Class II and each cost $549,454.00. Equally the cost of 4 NIBATTs and a platoon in Peacekeeping will require about 72 APCs for their operations based on the UN specifications among other requirements. This cost when put together will translate to $20,780,344.00 which is greater than the budget of security operations in Nigeria for 2012 (Muraina, 2014). Though, UN usually reimburses nations on equipments deployed in mission on monthly basis. Nigeria government does not have the money to buy these equipments considering the state of the economy and dilapidated infrastructures in the country. Studies have showed that much of the resources allocated to defence are usually for recurrent expenditure on issues such as payment of monthly salaries and wages, settlement of pension and gratuity among other allowances (Muraina, 2014). It is obvious that Nigeria’s defence budget 80% goes to recurrent expenditure while only 20% goes to capital expenditure. This lion share of the defence spending going to recurrent expenditure does not indicate adequate funding of defence expenditure in the country. The Security budget of Nigeria 2011-2015 received the sum of $236billion lamented by a senior military officer. Yet, he said the country continues to face attacks from BH, kidnapping and crude Oil theft and destructions of installations in the Niger-Delta. This buttressed the point that the country is seriously engulf with massive corruption. Out of this amount ($236billion), only 12% goes to the capital expenditure, the rest 88% goes to recurrent expenditure (Premium Times, June 28, 2015). Therefore, the inability of the Nigerian government to equip her troops properly and adequately to meet UN standard and specifications affects the morale of Nigerian military. This poor state of logistics dampens the morale of troops particularly when they see other countries like Ghana which is not endowed like Nigeria but meet up the needs of their troops.

However, with all these challenges and difficulties confronting the Nigerian military in the recent past which led to the reduction of Nigeria’s contributions to UN peacekeeping; the country is still willing and ready to contribute her troops in the promotion of the international peace and security under the UN auspices as observed by one of military expert who responded to our questions. Recently, Nigeria dropped from her position as the Second largest in 2000 (3,404) and fourth largest troop contributor in 2012 to number 10th in 2016. By August 2016, Nigeria was having only 1,721 troops, 46 Military Experts and 403 Police totaling 2,170 (UN troops contributors, 2016).

This reduction in the strength is not unconnected with the challenges discussed earlier. But military experts in Nigeria said, Nigerian cannot afford to abandoned peacekeeping because of this internal challenges. Nigeria military need the UN more than necessary because it enhances the exposure of the military to the outside world which help in polishing their skills and performance as agreed by all our respondents. UN peacekeeping expose the military personnel to international best practices in the field of War, which in turn improved the
professional skills of the participating soldiers. Training of soldiers cost a lot of money to any country, hence involving in the UN peacekeeping relief Nigerian government the burden of continues training of troops in their barracks (Muraina, 2016).

Another major factor discovered by this study is that the economic benefits attached to peacekeeping particularly under the UN. Soldiers struggled to be enlisted in the UN peacekeeping because of the financial remuneration paid by the UN to individual soldiers. This payment has improved the living condition of many soldiers in Nigeria. There is no gain saying many soldiers and police who returned from the UN peacekeeping usually display some level of financial difference compared to his/her colleagues who were not privileged to participate. In addition to payment of their allowances, soldiers in UN peacekeeping are properly kitted.

Evidence available so far indicates that the Nigerian state is still willing to contribute to the UN peacekeeping operations. The Nigerian military has human resources capable of being deployed for global, regional and sub-regional peace missions. Under the UN initiatives, enormous advantages accrue from the deployment as troops of participating nations are usually exposed to join training constantly. Troops are also adequately kitted and handsomely paid their remuneration on time as when due (Adewuyi, 2009). It has been argued by Nigeria military experts that, UN mission help in the enhancement of the force doctrinal and operational practices as noted by our military respondent. Soldiers improved their combat readiness and professionalism in UN peacekeeping. By and large, UN peacekeeping significantly affects nation’s military capabilities positively. Senior military officer in the Nigerian Army forces on condition of anonymity posit that Nigerian military force enormously argument her armory, skills, professionalism through UN. Therefore, he concluded even with the present internal security challenges, Nigeria cannot afford to withdraw from UN peacekeeping completely. However, he added, Nigeria need to review her foreign policy posture on peacekeeping to enable her benefits tremendously like other nations of the world such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and even nearby Ghana.

The prospect of Nigeria to join the club of the big boys of the world as a representative of the African countries in the UN Security Council Permanent seat will be enhance by Nigeria’s contribution to UN peacekeeping missions. Nigeria has intimidating credentials in the past as the most contributing nation in Africa and a significant player in the world of peacekeeping. Therefore, Nigeria is not willing to be distracted by her local internal conflicts from her traditional commitments build on foreign policy trust of promoting global peace. No doubt, Nigeria has made remarkable efforts in the advancement of the primary role of the UN Security Council; hence, the vigor of quest for the membership of this club of “big boys” cannot go dimmed because of the present emerging local conflicts. Till date, Nigeria has participated in not less than 40 UN peacekeeping around the world of the 70 UN led peacekeeping as of February 2017.

Participation of Nigeria in the UN peacekeeping operations around the globe has increase the personality of Nigeria as a regional and continental power in the world. The recognition of Nigeria in the comity of nations is not really connected with her economic or military power but her steady involvement in the promotion of global peace and security under UN.
Economic and military powers are some of the major indices of recognizing powerful global actors such as US, UK, France, Russia, Germany, China etc. Nigeria and her immediate colleagues in the troops contributing countries became recognized internationally because the role they have been playing in the promotion of international peace and security through the instrumentality of the UN peacekeeping activities.

The prospects for the continuous demand for Nigeria’s army to participate in the global peace promotion remain bright in the 21st century and beyond (Gbor, 2007). It has been very glaring that the west is fast reducing their participation in peacekeeping in third world and African countries in particular. Hence, Nigeria is seen as a power house that can promote the UN responsibilities of ensuring international peace and security in Africa. In other words, peacekeeping activities is been shifted to regional bodies like the ECOWAS, AU, NATO etc. UN is looking for countries that will led regional peacekeeping and Nigeria as the most experienced country with a built up foreign policy thrust of promoting international peace cannot withdraw from peacekeeping even with prevailing internal security challenges and its economic melt-down as observed by our respondents.

However, most of the people interviewed are of the opinion that Nigeria need to review her foreign policy posture to reflect citizens’ friendly foreign policy. In other words, Nigeria needs to have foreign policy that will bring socio-economic development to the country. If indeed, nation’s external relations are primarily and ultimately about the well-being of its people, then it is to be expected that the policy guiding it should be tailored accordingly (Sanda, 2012). In spite of the long years of Nigeria’s involvement in the peacekeeping operations, it is abundant clear that Nigeria is not gaining much as expected from her human and material contributions to the UN peacekeeping. Lacks of functional and serviceable equipments are some of the major setback that hindered Nigeria from maximizing the benefits of participating in UN peacekeeping. The military expert went further to argue that the country lack the political will to equip her contingents for UN peacekeeping. This has rubbed the country of huge economic benefits running into billions of USD (Gambari, 2008).

The greatest disadvantages observed by this study, it reveals that Nigeria does not participate in post conflict reconstruction exercise. Most TCCs work their way to participate in post conflict peace building. But Nigeria surprisingly folds her arms and allows other nations to reap where they did not cultivate. Nigeria needs to increase her defence spending in the area of expenditure procurement. That only 12% of defence spending going into expenditure is dangerous for an aspiring regional power. She needs to reposition her military strategy to accommodate the growing technological advancement in the world to make them more relevant for UN services.

The study also revealed that Nigeria is absolutely deficient in the area of providing functional Contingent Owned Equipments (COEs) which will provide huge money for the country through the policy of UN reimbursement of TCCs. UN usually signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with TCCs before any Peacekeeping deployment will take place. Nigeria used to supply COEs that are below UN standard specification which ultimately affect the payment of Nigeria negatively.
6. CONCLUSION

Nigeria has been recognized as a strategic country in the world of peacekeeping operations. Though, the country is faced with serious internal security challenges ranging from BH insurgency in the northeast of the country, the continues reoccurrence of ethno-religious conflict in the north central area of the country and the climax of environmental degradation cum militancy in the Oil rich Niger-Delta region situated in the south-south of the country. The Nigerian military are on top of these conflicts to ensure restoration of peace and security in the affected areas.

Nigeria is a major contributor of troops to UN peacekeeping operations. But internal security challenges are fast reducing the numerical strength of Nigeria’s contributions to the UN peacekeeping. However, Nigeria is still willing to continue her contributions because of advantages attached to it. UN peacekeeping improves military skills and expose local soldiers to international practices and join training of military officers. The positive experiences of the Nigerian army in UN organized peacekeeping operations make it crucial that the country continues her involvement under the world body. This is very important because world peace and security is a collective liability of all nations and international organizations alike. Nigeria, to improve her economic benefit from UN peacekeeping engagement she needs to strengthen her foreign policy instruments. Government need to increase her military budget in other to buy more serviceable equipments that will meet the standard of the UN assessment.

REFERENCES


